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(Udāna) Satta Sutta 2

Dutiya (Udāna) Satta Sutta The Second (Udāna) Discourse on the Stuck | U 7.4

Theme: Lust blinds and traps us

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2018

1 Overview

1.1 COMMON THEME

The following 3 suttas centre on the same polysemous¹ word *satta*² as a play on its senses of “a being” (n) and “stuck or attached” (past participle of *sajjati*: “hanging, clinging, attached or stuck to”).³

(Rādha) Satta Sutta	S 23.2/3:189 f	SD 52.2e	on <i>satta</i> as “being” and as “stuck”
(Udāna) Satta Sutta 1	U 63/7.3/75	SD 52.2f	we are fettered to sense-desires
(Udāna) Satta Sutta 2	U 64/7.4/75 f	SD 52.2g	we are caught in sense-desires

1.2 THE (UDĀNA) SATTA SUTTAS

1.2.1 Same background. The two (Udāna) Satta Suttas (U 7.3 + U 7.4) are based on the same background—a festival of sensual indulgence in Sāvattihī. The (Udāna) Satta Sutta 1 records the monks witnessing the excitement in the city,⁴ while in the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 2 (in this Sutta), it is the Buddha himself who witnesses the orgy.

Such an account reminds us of the highly urbanized state of central Gangetic plains in the Buddha’s time. Sāvattihī, the capital of Kosala, was ruled by king Pasenadi. Together with Magadha, ruled by king Bimbisāra, and then his son, Ajāta, sattu, the two kingdoms unified much of the plains, to bring widespread peace, a prospering economy and a rise in population inhabiting the cities and market-towns.⁵

1.2.2 Sensual indulgence. The Sutta Commentary tells us that the Sutta background is an occasion when the residents of Sāvattihī, except for the noble disciples, have proclaimed a festival and are readying a drinking-area (*āpāna, bhūmi*) according to their means, and then indulging in sensual pleasures by way of eating, drinking and gratifying their senses, openly and secretly.

The monks, on their almsround in Sāvattihī, see those people, here and there, such as in their houses, in the parks and gardens, indulging in sensual pleasures. These monks, upon returning to the monastery (*vihāra*), report the matter to the Buddha, hoping to receive some subtle and profound Dharma-teaching. (UA 365)

1.2.3 A single Sutta?

1.2.3.1 It is interesting to note that while the two Suttas have the same name—that of the (Udāna) Satta Sutta—they only share the same opening story, that is, of the wild festival in Sāvattihī. The word

¹ On the significance of Pali polysemy, see SD 1.1 (4.4.5) ↑SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2).

² See SD 52.2 (4.1).

³ V 1:185; D 2:246; Nm 1:23, 24; Dh 342; J 1:376.

⁴ See SD 52.2f (1.2.2).

⁵ On the condition of the central Gangetic plains during the Buddha’s time, see SD 52.1 (2.2.1.9-2.2.1.11).

satta, meaning “stuck,” is the common theme of the opening prose of both the Suttas—the people of Sāvattḥī are described as being “excessively attached to sensual pleasures” [§3 in both Suttas].

While in the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 1, the word **satta** occurs a total of 5 times (twice in the prose, thrice in the verse), it occurs only twice in the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 2 (both in its prose introduction, as in Sutta 1). Its verse makes no mention of *satta*.

1.2.3.2 It is possible that at an early stage, the two texts formed a single unified Sutta, with a common opening story about the festive mood in Sāvattḥī. The second part of the prose opening differs. First, the monks witness the worldly occasion in Sāvattḥī and report it to the Buddha. Then, the Buddha himself goes on almsround in Sāvattḥī and sees it for himself.

The two verses could have each been uttered on the two occasions, or they could have worked as twin closing verses. In due course—to highlight the significance of each of the two verses—the opening occasions formed their own Sutta. Hence, they share the same title.

1.3 TEACHINGS OF THE (UDĀNA) SATTA SUTTA 2

1.3.1 Teaching

1.3.1.1 Both the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 1 (U 7.3) and 2 (U 7.4) have teachings in both prose and verse. Hence, they belong to the category or “limb” (*aṅga*) of **geyya** (mixed prose and verse) in the ninefold limbs of the Teacher’s teaching (*nav’aṅga satthu,sāsana*).⁶

1.3.1.2 The prose section tells us—as in **the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 1** (U 7.3)—how most of the citizens (*nāgaraka*) of Sāvattḥī are **“excessively attached to sensual pleasures. They dwelt soaked in them, hankering after them, fettered by them, stupefied by them, infatuated with them, utterly intoxicated by them”** [§3]. The Commentary gives some explanation for each of the key words in this statement.⁷

1.3.1.3 Hence, the background of both the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 1 and 2 are exactly the same. They differ only in two ways:

- (1) while in Sutta 1, it is the monks who witness the orgy in Sāvattḥī, in Sutta 2, it is the Buddha himself; and
- (2) that they each have their own closing verse: while the Sutta 1 verse has 4 lines, that of Sutta 2 has 6 lines. [§7]

1.3.2 The *kām’andha* verse [§7]

1.3.2.1 [§7a] “Blinded by sensual pleasures, covered up in a net” (*kām’andhā jāla,sañchannā*). There are two metaphors here, and we shall discuss each in turn.

(1) **“Blinded by sensual desire.”** While the theme of the *kāmesu satta* verse of the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 1 (U 7.3) is “attachment or ‘being stuck’ (*satta*) in sensual pleasures,” that of the (Udāna) Satta Sutta 2 (U 7.4)—although bearing the same title—is **“blindness”** (*andha*), that is, being blinded by sensual desires (*kām’andha*).

⁶ The 9 limbs of the Teacher’s teaching are: the discourses (*sutta*), prose/verse (*geyya*), expositions (*veyyakaraṇa*), verses (*gāthā*), verses of uplift (*udāna*), thus-said teachings (*iti,vuttaka*), birth-stories (*jataka*), marvels (*abbhuta,-dhamma*) and catechisms (*vedalla*): see SD 52.2f (1.3.1.1). For details, see SD 30.10 (4); SD 26.11 (3.2.1.3).

⁷ These descriptions are given in the footnotes in the text, U 7.3,3 (SD 5.2f).

The Commentary explains *kām'andhā* as meaning “blinded with sensual defilement in the sense-objects through being made unable to see (their reality)” (*vatthu,kāmena kilesa,kāmena andhā vicakkhukā kata*, UA 367). The point is that sense-objects by themselves can do nothing to us. It is our desire arising within us towards these objects that defiles us.⁸ As stated in **the Nibbedhika (Pariyāya) Sutta** (A 6.63):

The thought of lust is a person’s desire:
the diversely beautiful in the world remain just as they are. (A 6.63,3.4), SD 6.11

(2) “**Covered up in a net.**” While the Buddha was leaving Sāvattihī, walking towards Jeta,vana, he saw a large number of fish trapped in the fishnet left in the river Acira,vatī, unable to get out. Later on, he saw a suckling calf, with neck stretched forth, running after its mother for milk, and putting its mouth under her thighs (UA 367 f).

Jala,sañchannā means overspread, enveloped, engulfed by craving, like a pool of water that is encircled by a net with very fine mesh from top to bottom. Craving forms a similar net over one’s existence and that of others’ with regard to the internal sense-bases and external sense-objects, and to states that are dependent on them, spread over countless moments that are past and so on. Craving nets us all within itself to our detriment. (UA 367)

1.3.2.2 [§7b] “Cloaked in craving’s shroud” (*taṇhā,chadana,chāditā*). We—our mind and actions—are covered up, like water with duckweed and green scum. In this way, we are unable to skillfully exercise our mind, because of the hindrance of sense-pleasures. (US 267)

1.3.2.3 [§7c] “Bound by the Kinsmen of the heedless” (*pamatta,bandhunā baddhā*). This is an allusion to Māra the bad one. We are bound by Māra as defilement (*kilesa,māra*) and Māra the deity (*deva-putta,māra*)—when we are bound by Māra as defilement, we are also caught by Māra the deity.⁹ For, it is said in **the Māna Sutta** (S 4.15)

There is a snare that moves through the skies; by means of that I will bind you—	that which is mental, moving about, you will not escape from me, recluse! (S 4.15/1:111,28 = S 476), SD 61.10 ¹⁰
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This “snare” (*pāsa*), explains Buddhaghosa, is that of lust (*raga,pāsa*), which finds even those who move through space (*anta,likkha,cara*) (SA 1:177).¹¹ The Commentary’s Tīkā (subcommentary) adds that it refers to those with the 5 superknowledges (*pañc’abhiññā*).¹² It is more likely that *anta,likkha,cara* (lit, “sky-going”) means that lust also affects celestial beings (the “sky-goers”), who, as long as they are unawakened, are still subject to lust; hence, under Māra’s power.

The Nāga,samāla Thera,gāthā (Tha268d) speaks of “Death’s snare” (*maccu,pāsa*), which Dhammapāla says refers to how a woman’s beauty is to a monk or one with a renunciant’s mind, that is, as “a net spread by Māra” (ThaA 2:110 f). Māra as *maccu* is the personification of death.

⁸ See **Nibbedhika (Pariyāya) S** (A 6.63,3.4), SD 6.11; **Na Santi S** (S 1:34,6, esp S 104) SD 42.6.

⁹ On the 5 kinds of māra (*pañca,māra*), see UA 216. Also **Māra**, SD 61.8; SD 36.4 (2.3); **Sela S** (M 92,19 = Sn 561b = Tha 831b) n, SD 45.7a; SD 52.1 (9.1.2.2).

¹⁰ = V 1:21,17. Cf S 1.64 = S 210, S 1.65 = S 211.

¹¹ Qu at MA 1:41;UA 367; It 1:61, 2:20; ThaA 3:5; BA 128; PmA 2:520; DhsA 140.

¹² Ie, psychic powers (SD 27.5a (5)). The arhats are said to have the 6 *abhiññā*: **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11,55-66), SD 1.7; SD 27.5a (5).

1.3.2.4 [§7d] “Like fish into the mouth of a fishnet (*macchā’va kuminā,mukhe*). We have been told that the Buddha, on his way back to Jeta,vana, saw a large number of fish caught in a fishnet in the river [1.3.2.1(2)]. This is analogous to our having fallen under the power of lust so that we are “stuck” to what we see as desirable sense-objects and views, unable to free ourself from them.

The best known net simile is that of the “perfect net” (*brahma,jāla*) in **the Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1). It is like a huge net that covers the whole pool, and all the water-creatures in it are trapped in the net. Even so, all our views are caught in the perfect net so that we are unable to free ourself unless we rid ourself of the views.¹³

1.3.2.5 [§7e] “They follow decay and death” (*jarā,marañam anventi*), which follows the Burmese manuscript and the Commentaries. The other manuscripts read *gacchanti* instead of *anventi* (lit, “go after”). Hence, the alternate reading is “They go to decay and death.” We can take both readings as having the same sense, as both work equally well with the attending simile of the suckling calf following or going to its mother for milk. [1.3.2.6]

This line develops from **§7c**, showing Māra to also entail “decay and death” (*jarā,marañā*), that is, the pervasive nature of all sentient existence. Life surely decays, and death follows life both in the world and in the heavens. There is no being, worldly or heavenly—from the highest gods to the lowest creature—that is eternal. Whatever exists must exist in *time*, and is necessarily impermanent.

1.3.2.6 [§7f] “As a suckling calf (follows) its mother” (*vaccho khīra,pako’va mātaram*). This line serves to reinforce the import of **§7e**. A suckling calf is naturally and inextricably imprinted on its mother. A newborn or very young human or animal “imprints” or establishes a strong behavior pattern of recognition and attraction towards others of its own kind, especially its parents or even substitute from other species.

Such a natural behaviour occurs as an assurance of the survival of the being. In other words, it is Nature’s way of ensuring that the species continues to proliferate. However, ultimately, birth and existence entail death. The highly evolved beings, especially humans, are capable of understanding the need and possibility for attaining the “death-free,” that is, nirvana.¹⁴

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(Udāna) Satta Sutta 2

The Second (Udāna) Discourse on the Stuck

U 7.4

1 Thus have I heard.¹⁵

2 At one time, the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika’s monastery-park in Jeta’s grove outside Sāvattthī.

¹³ D 1,146.2 (SD 25.3 (29.4)).

¹⁴ On nirvana as the “birth-free” (*ajāta*), see SD 50.3; on the “death-free” (*amata*), see **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,-18.4 n), SD 1.11; SD 50.1; SD 50.8 (2.2).

¹⁵ §§1-3 are as at **(Udāna) Satta S 1** (U 7.1), SD 52.21f.

3 At that time, the people¹⁶ in Sāvattthī¹⁷ were,¹⁸ for the most part, excessively¹⁹ attached to sensual pleasures.²⁰ They dwelt soaked in them, hankering after them, fettered by them, infatuated with them, utterly intoxicated by them.²¹

4 Then, at dawn, the Blessed One, having dressed himself, taking bowl and robe, entered Savatthī for alms.

5 The Blessed One saw that *the people in Sāvattthī were, for the most part, excessively attached to sensual pleasures. They dwelt soaked in them, hankering after them, fettered by them, infatuated with them, utterly intoxicated by them.*

6 Then, the Blessed One, understanding the significance of the occasion, uttered this udana:

The *kām'andhā* verse²²

<p>7 <i>Kām'andhā jāla,sañchannā²³ taṇhā,chadana,chāditā pamatta,bandhunā²⁴ baddhā²⁵ macchā'va kuminā,mukhe²⁷ jarā,marañam anventi²⁹ vaccho khīra,pako'va mātaran'ti³⁰</i></p>	<p>Blinded by sensual desire, covered up in a net, cloaked in craving's shroud, bound by the Kinsmen of the heedless,²⁶ like fish into the mouth of a fishnet:²⁸ they follow decay and death as a suckling calf its mother.</p>
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— evaṃ —

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¹⁶ "The people," *manussā* (masc, 3 pl). Although the n is masculine, there is nothing in the context to indicate that the activities were restricted only to males.

¹⁷ Ee Se *sāvattthiyam* (loc); Be Ce *sāvattthiyā* (gen).

¹⁸ "Were," *honti* (Be omits, but found in many MSS): see U:M 161 n10.

¹⁹ U:W failed to read *ativelam*. See U:M 162 n18.

²⁰ *Tena kho pana samayena sāvattthiyā manussā yebhuyyena kāmesu* [loc as ins] *ativelam sattā honti* [Be Ke omit].

²¹ *Rattā giddhā gathitā* [Be Ce; Ee Se UA:Be *gadhītā*] *mucchitā ajjhopannā* [Ee Se; Be Ce *ajjhosannā*; see CPD svv] *sammattaka,jātā* [Be Ce Se Comy; Ee *sampattaka,jātā*] *kāmesu viharanti*. Comy glosses *sammattaka,jātā* as "having become (*jāta*) completely (*sam*) intoxicated (*mattaka*); ie, *sammata* = *suṭṭhu*. (UA 365)

²² Qu at Peṭk 24; Nett 36, 128 f.

²³ Ke *jāla,parikiṇṇā*.

²⁴ Ke *bandhanā*.

²⁵ Be Ce Ee; Se *bandhā*.

²⁶ See (1.3.2.3).

²⁷ Be Ce Ee; Se *kummina-*. *Kumina* (BHS *kupina*; Tib *dol*), a fishnet (V 3:62; Tha 297; J 2:238; ThaA 2:125; ThīA 243; Uv 3.3; Śikṣ 77.4).

²⁸ This verse, from a to here = Tha 297 (**Rāhula Tha**) = Uv 3.3.

²⁹ Be UA Peṭk Nett *anventi*; Ce Ee Se *gacchanti*.

³⁰ This figure at Dh 284d, but where *mātaram* reads *mātari*.